

# Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies

---

Volume 5

Article 18

---

2018

## Review of Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists

Lauren Sorensen

*University of California, Los Angeles*, [laurensorensen@ucla.edu](mailto:laurensorensen@ucla.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Sorensen, Lauren (2018) "Review of Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*: Vol. 5 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol5/iss1/18>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies by an authorized editor of EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. For more information, please contact [elischolar@yale.edu](mailto:elischolar@yale.edu).

Cocciolo, Anthony. *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2017.

In *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*, Anthony Cocciolo provides a clearly written, up-to-date, and enjoyable text to assist archivists and collection managers in need of real-world guidance in tackling moving image and sound materials. Generously written with the needs of archivists' day-to-day work in mind, Cocciolo provides material that allows practitioners of any level of experience to gain insight into practices involving management, conservation, and access to moving image and sound collections. Additionally, the book devotes sections to web archiving and other digital collection activities. The book is not only an essential handbook and guide, but also a reflection on the current state of the field. Citing scholars such as Anne Gilliland, Karen Gracy, and Sam Kula, Cocciolo uses the first chapter to lay the groundwork for the underlying methods of approach in the book, namely connecting scholarship and practice, and pinpointing questions that remain to be addressed in future research.

The book is in two parts: the first section is titled "Archival Practices for Moving Image and Sound Collections," and the second section, "Format Specific Guidance." The strategy of separating the book this way assists the reader in navigating technical steps involved in moving image and sound collection management by first learning about a management or preservation technique and then reading about the details of enacting that technique in the guidance section. The first section addresses traditional archival principles and practices, discusses larger topics and challenges, and subsequently recommends solutions and strategies. Peppered throughout the first section are case-study examples of real world practice, which point to other parts of the book for further instruction. The book is process-oriented, written with a contextual, pedagogical frame, and it speaks to research and practice in complementary measure.

"Appraisal and Reappraisal" is a compelling chapter in both tone and utility. Cocciolo starts off the book by offering a summary history of appraisal theory in archival literature, and describes appraisal issues unique to moving image and sound materials by explaining new approaches and addressing the topic of technical appraisal and reappraisal. This chapter directly tackles questions about processes for moving image and sound materials, discussing collectivist strategies such as collaborations with other institutions as well as critical issues like scarcity of playback equipment. Since moving image preservation and management can easily become a costly endeavor, Cocciolo pinpoints methods that can facilitate cost-saving, directly assisting collection administrators and those responsible for budgeting and other types of management. The technical appraisal section is impressive and useful, giving a clarifying picture of technical properties and concepts that archivists need in order to prioritize at-risk materials: scarcity of equipment, file formats, digital preservation infrastructure, and more. Cocciolo shares strategies for assessing image quality for different communities, such as museum-goers versus on-site researchers. These strategies can help provide archivists unfamiliar with the technical qualities of files and their display with the language to approach a conversation and help make informed decisions in collaboration with their technology department, helping to establish strategic relationships and professional allyships with those working in this interconnected field.

"Accessioning, Arrangement, and Description" highlights issues particular to moving image and sound including item-level versus collection-level decision-making, working within existing

systems or software, and shared standards such as PBCore metadata dictionary and AMIM2 descriptive standard. As with all chapters in this section, it concludes with an example from archival practice, in this case a project for the archives of the Kinkaid School. Cocciolo provides a look at practice through an interview with a lone arranger creating an inventory of audiovisual materials in the archive. This process resulted in outcomes useful for collection managers and archivists: listing the fields used for the inventory and documenting the process, including outlining which media were considered unique and which items were selected for cleaning and digitization. For collection managers, this example can help outline decisions that can assist with writing grants for funding this part of the process, or budget justifications.

In “Legal and Ethical Issues” (chapter 3), Cocciolo offers an overview of copyright basics, as well as recommendations for approaching this often intimidating topic, including the recommendation that archives seek to obtain transfer of copyright to the archive in all possible scenarios. Additionally, he describes a new and innovative approach to assigning Creative Commons licenses to works donated to or deposited with an archive. He also addresses fair use and so-called layered rights, offering a grounded view and steps forward archivists might pursue, and discusses privacy questions, peppering example cases throughout. He describes the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and the difficulties archivists face when handling material that is burdened with Digital Rights Management, and then considers terms of service agreements for media shared to platforms or media companies like Instagram and Facebook. As is his style throughout, Cocciolo breaks down each topic to assist the reader in making choices, concluding by recommending risk assessment as an overarching strategy.

A topic bigger than the sum of its parts, “Digital Preservation of Digitized and Born Digital Content” (chapter 4) provides grounded steps for implementation by looking at a variety of scenarios, all the while attending to stepping points on the path toward implementing digital preservation at an institution. Giving an overarching view of shared standards to start, Cocciolo quickly acknowledges that many small to mid-sized institutions have resource issues in meeting basic digital preservation best practices. From there, he cites research done by Digital PoWRR and proceeds to address issues such as file fixity monitoring and format obsolescence in an actionable manner; he places each in context, for example, he writes that fixity monitoring could be completed by the archivist in collaboration with a systems administrator in-house, or by services that provide remote storage. Covering partly technical, partly administrative decisions like this can help readers acquire a language for discussing the bigger picture when it comes to making decisions alongside colleagues with different backgrounds and skill sets. Cocciolo provides an overview of models for digital preservation, storage technologies, fixity, format obsolescence, the all-important development of relationships with technology department staff, refreshing equipment, and cloud-storage options. The chapter ends with *several* international examples from archival practice that contextualize many of the concepts and steps described in the chapter, citing the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the Marist Archives in Wellington, New Zealand, and an anonymous mid-sized art museum, among others.

“Access and Outreach” (chapter 5) focuses on online distribution channels, evaluating common outlets used to provide access, both for-profit and non-profit, as well as home-built or in-house hosting solutions such as Omeka. It also discusses social media, digitization on demand, and educational strategies. In addressing the relationship between access and preservation, it

highlights accessibility for the disabled community. A favorite example from this chapter is the approach to digitization on demand, which describes the practice of reformatting on-site and offers information to this end, including a unique approach that Cocciolo calls a “concurrency” strategy, which involves real-time, supervised digitization while simultaneously completing other tasks. Again, this sharing of positive real-world experiences helps open up a specialized subfield into a more visible, describable, and operationalized environment of practice.

The chapter “Interactions with Moving Image and Sound Producers” (chapter 6) is a unique section of the book, highlighting two areas that audiovisual archivists often view as central to preservation and access in archives: first, the important knowledge transfer that occurs between the archive and producer of materials, and second, steps to care for materials that a producer may put into action outside an archival institution. Given the shortened time span to enact conservation measures on digital and magnetic media, in comparison to more materially resilient paper materials, this kind of guidance is essential. In addition to addressing archival practice on the part of the producer, this chapter also connects to a number of different chapters in the first section by addressing topics such as copyright and media formats, making it a bridge between the book’s two sections.

The remaining chapters offer a deeper dive into technical concepts and specific activities around media types found in collections relating back to the first section. The concepts described include codecs, migration of files from one physical media to another, histories of technologies like video formats, analog and digital video characteristics, and so on, rounding out the discourse by directing the reader to the first section of the book. Practitioners can use these more granularly described concepts in their day-to-day work, referring back when questions arise about, for example, the sustainability of a format or how to migrate a file from one media type to a central repository. These chapters cover the unique risk factors of each media type, definitions of these types in context, and a thorough explanation of the potential provenance of these items, including a background on broadcast histories for analog video, as well as distribution practices. Cocciolo aides the archivist in identifying legacy media items, for example, by articulating a brief history of how items such as half-inch open-reel camera originals that may be unique were used in production practice. This knowledge prepares the archivist or collections manager to appraise and prioritize from an informed point of view. Illustrations and photographs are numerous, and referenced specifically in the text. Cocciolo’s work with students is closely incorporated into examples that illustrate the truism that practice and pedagogy work hand-in-hand. This method offers an approachable example to those for whom moving image archiving may appear intimidating or exceedingly technical in nature.

Moving image archiving can seem like a daunting effort because of preexisting assumptions about levels of expertise, volume of material, or other challenges. Anthony Cocciolo gives an astute reading of the challenges experienced by the archivists who work with this material in order to frame the content and activities described in *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*. The book offers the reader answers to the question, “what is the best I can do with resources available to my institution or project?,” covering a range of methods and materials in a familiar, practical, and sensible manner. Often, because moving image and sound collections are so technical, practices are too new for common or best practices to yet be established through formal research. Cocciolo’s style of approach appreciates that hands-on practice can turn into

highly regarded research. This excellent book offers a current, deep knowledge with a light touch, a generosity with experience and practical information shared alongside context-specific thinking and clear ideas for summoning future research.